

*Seeks to Ensure Accountable Use of ARRA Funds*

May 29, 2010

**HARRISBURG, PA** — Earlier this week, Congressman Joe Sestak offered a statement to the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) public hearing regarding changes to Pennsylvania's 2010-2011 Weatherization State Plan. Elizabeth Crampton of the Congressman's District Office in Media relayed his support for the efficient and effective utilization of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds applied to the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). In 2009, Congressman Sestak voted for the ARRA, which allotted an additional \$4.728 billion dollars to provide energy education and home conservation modifications through the WAP at no cost to qualifying low-income households in Pennsylvania. The emphasis of his statement was to propose that strict accountability and transparency measures be applied to the expenditure of those funds. A copy of that statement is included in this press release.

"In the midst of a historic recession and at a time when trust in government is exceedingly low, we have an obligation to ensure that this unprecedented three year increase in ARRA weatherization funds fulfils the goal of providing more weatherization services to low-income families, investing in a lasting green job infrastructure in Pennsylvania, and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, all of which contribute to increased economic and national security," said Congressman Sestak. "On average, weatherization reduces heating bills by 32% and overall energy bills by about \$350 per year at current prices, which could be a critical help to our

fixed income population, especially our nation's seniors."

During Congressman Sestak's 2010 Working Families Resources Summit and his Veteran's Summit, representatives from WAP provided information to his constituents about how to apply for the program. Congressman Sestak has also issued public comment on the proposed draft recovery reporting program guidance documents for the WAP, State Energy Program (SEP), and Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program; written letters to the DOE inquiring about WAP; and had representatives from his staff meet with federal WAP representatives to discuss expanding the program to include further accountability to those also in need of roof repairs.

"I encourage a broad discussion of the execution of WAP among elected officials at all levels of government and their constituents. I will continue to monitor the program closely. It is my goal to only support programs of real value to our community," said Congressman Sestak. "Positive

and negative feedback on WAP from constituents, officials, faith-based groups and other community organizations are helpful to me as I continue to develop a legislative agenda that offers as many solutions as possible to the problems that face the constituents of the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.”

*Further information and applications for WAP can be attained by contacting the following agencies:*

Community Action Agency of Delaware County (CAADC)

Weatherization

90 Jansen Avenue

Essington, PA 19029

(610) 521-9247

Housing Development Corporation of Lancaster County (HDC) (*for Chester County*)

439 East King Street

Lancaster, PA 17602

(800) 732-3554 or (717) 291-1911

Montgomery County Community Action Development Commission (CADCOM)

113 East Main Street

Norristown, PA 19041

(610) 277-6363

The DOE also has consumer fact sheets available at the link below designed to assist households in saving money and energy, which could also potentially be a resource:

<http://www.energy.gov/energyefficiency/index.htm>

### **Congressman Sestak's Statement**

Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)'s public hearing, 5/24

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)/Department of Energy (DOE) Weatherization State Plan for 2010-2011 and the DCED's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) Summary of Proposed 2010-2011 Changes.

In the midst of a historic recession and at a time when trust in government is exceedingly low, we have an obligation to ensure that this unprecedented three year increase in ARRA weatherization funds is utilized in the most efficient and transparent manner.

With the addition of \$4,728,750,000 billion dollars from ARRA, our nation has the opportunity to provide more weatherization services to low-income families; invest in a lasting green job infrastructure; and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions through WAP, all of which contribute to increased economic and national security.

I have made public comment on the proposed draft recovery reporting program guidance documents for the WAP, State Energy Program (SEP), and Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program; written letters to the DOE inquiring about WAP; and asked my staff to meet with federal WAP representatives, in order to ensure the highest quality of public service for the constituents of my district, many of whom are increasingly cynical that government programs can deliver the level of efficient performance that their tax dollars deserve.

Today, I am concerned about the reduction of inspected units to 3% from 10% and the reduction in inspected completed units to 7% from 10% in the ARRA 2010-2011 WAP. As such, I support the implementation of the proposed standardized monitoring procedure; 100% program monitoring by subgrantees; and 12 full-time state staff to conduct onsite monitoring of weatherization work at subgrantee sites, as well as other efforts that seek to ensure the highest standard of accountability to the citizens of Pennsylvania and the most responsible utilization of ARRA funds.

I also offer my strongest support for subgrantees receiving 50% of their funds based on performance quality metrics over the course of a contract period.

I applaud the DCED's move to incorporate Crisis Interface households into the high priority list to better serve our most vulnerable populations. This winter one of my constituents, a senior, went for several months without a functioning primary heating system, while awaiting regular weatherization work. This individual was then not able to access weatherization funds because she was unable to afford the necessary roof repairs on her home.

I do not believe an inability to repair one's roof as a result of a fixed income should exclude seniors or the disabled from the WAP funds. Federal, state, and local authorities should work to increase the 'incidental repairs' allotment of \$500, in the spirit of the Weatherization Plus Program, or put the local roof repairing programs under the same umbrella as the weatherization program to streamline the process for the taxpayer. The influx of additional stimulus funding for WAP, which I voted for, will only be available for 3 years. We need to make sure the citizens with the greatest need can benefit from this critical opportunity and taxpayers do not see their money wasted through the uncoordinated action of local, state, and federal government.

In addition, I believe that a thorough cost-benefit analyses in partnership with Pennsylvania State University (PSU) and DCED surveys of ARRA (and WAP) clients to document subgrantee



and subcontractor performance, program success, and areas of needed improvement will be invaluable resources for Pennsylvanians, who deserve open access to the information about a program that should, if appropriately managed, contribute to a comprehensive system of energy reduction efforts; diminish harmful emissions; reduce Pennsylvania's reliance on fossil fuels; and improve the housing stock in the Commonwealth.

I trust that information gathered through this and other studies will be available in a timely and accessible fashion and I request that a summary of the PSU analyses be sent to all of the federal elected officials in the state of Pennsylvania.

As we address the critical importance of program metrics, I strongly urge the implementation of a status check and aging of requests from start to completion, including reasons for delay or rejection, so that necessary follow-up action can be taken and the relevant authorities can track and then streamline this process as well.

Finally, I would request information on how the constituents of my district can utilize our region's weatherization training center, as the state of Pennsylvania continues to build a competitive skilled energy conservation workforce.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts on this matter and I look forward seeing the best examples of good government come out of the WAP for 2010-2011.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.*

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***Steps to Ensure Accountable Use of ARRA Funds***